

Memories of Saratoga

By LaDrue Dorton

On the 26th of July, 1920, my Grandfather William S. Evans came to our house in his Model T. Ford Sedan. I was very excited because we didn't have many visitors with automobiles. I was even more excited when he told me to get in. As he drove away I asked him where we were going. He replied, "To a birthday party." I asked, "Where is the party?" He said, "At Saratoga Springs Resort."

Well, I didn't know where Saratoga Springs was, but I didn't want to appear too stupid, so I didn't ask any more questions and just enjoyed the ride through the countryside.

When we arrived at the Resort, I was amazed to see such a large group of people, most of whom I didn't know. We went to an area in the pavilion where several of my aunts and uncles were seated at picnic tables, together with their families, some of whom I did not know.

Grandfather Evans introduced me to the ones I couldn't remember and I thanked them all for coming to my birthday party. Some of them looked a little puzzled, but Grandfather quickly said that they were all glad to be there and I am sure he gave them a big wink so they would go along with the gag.

William Clark was my great-grandfather on my Mother's side of the family and his birthday was also on the 26th of July and his descendants honored his memory by holding a reunion on his birthday. They referred to the reunion as, "The Birthday Party," and since it was held on my birthday, I thought it was my party, but the so called 'Birthday Party' was really the William Clark Family Reunion.

Grandfather Evans came by and took me to the Birthday Party (reunion)

on my next three birthdays, but I was older and wiser by then and knew what the occasion represented. The last time I attended the reunion was on my eighth birthday, but it was a very exciting outing.

Saratoga had a baseball field, but it was just four bases and a backstop. There were no outfield fences or grass and it was located in one corner of a large open field.

On this day it was being used as landing strip for an airplane that was taking people for rides for a fee. It was single engine bi-plane with two open cockpits, one for the pilot and one for a passenger. After the pilot had made several flights, he taxied over to the edge of the field to ask if there were any more people who wanted to fly. He didn't get any response, so he started to dismount.

Grandfather Evans took me by the hand and led me over to the airplane and asked the pilot if it was half fare for children. The pilot replied, "How many?" Grandfather said, "Just one." The pilot said, "I guess I have time and gas enough for one more flight."

With that, Grandfather lifted me up and put me in the passenger seat and fastened the safety belt. It all happened so fast that I didn't have time to protest. I think if I had been asked, I would have declined. I was pretty scared when we taxied to take off and the wind from the prop-blast made it hard to see, since I didn't have any goggles.

Once we were airborne it wasn't so bad and I kind of enjoyed looking down at the people and the landscape. We didn't stay up very long, only two or three passes over the Resort. I guess, one only got half a ride for half fare. I don't know what the fare was, but I know that I was the center of attraction and object of envy with my cousins.

So that's about all I can tell you about Saratoga Resort.